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## Current Opinion

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### **Apologetics Ancient and Modern**

The article on "The Greek Apologists of the Second Century," by Rev. W. Fairweather, published in our present issue, lies somewhat out of the ordinary scope of the *Biblical World*, but not, we are sure, outside the interests of our readers. The problem of the basis of authority in religion, the value of biblical revelation as compared with the results of philosophic thought, the relation of Christianity to current philosophy and other religions, with which these second-century thinkers were grappling, are all vital problems today. We cannot accept unchallenged the second-century answers to these problems, yet it cannot but be interesting and profitable to consider what those answers were.

### **Recent Books on the Apostle Paul**

The July number of the *American Journal of Theology* contains reviews of no less than five recent books upon the apostle Paul. Of these, one is by an American scholar, Professor B. W. Bacon; one by a French scholar, Maurice Goguel; and three are by Germans, Clemen, Weinel, and Wrede. The appearance of these books almost simultaneously, following a period of some years within which the life of the apostle has been treated almost exclusively in books on the apostolic age or on biblical theology, rather than in works dealing distinctively with the life and teaching of the apostle, is hardly an accident; it must be regarded as symptomatic of a revived interest in the apostle and a fresh recognition of his pre-eminent importance as the second founder of Christianity. The problems which these books discuss are of fundamental importance for our understanding of the rise of Christianity. What are the genuine epistles of Paul? What is the value of Acts as a source for the life of Paul? What are the psychological antecedents of Paul's theology? What was the relative influence upon him of Jewish and of Hellenistic thought? To what extent is his gospel in essential harmony with that of Jesus? To what extent does he, while ardently loyal to Jesus, in fact undermine and reverse the teachings of Jesus? The authors of these recent books do not treat these questions with equal emphasis, nor are they in entire agreement in the answers which they return to them. They are agreed, however, in recognizing that we

possess in the New Testament a body of genuinely Pauline letters from which the teachings, and in part the experiences, of the apostle may be learned, and that in the apostle himself we have to deal with a personality of commanding influence upon the development of early Christianity. Over the question of the influences which tended to make Paul's theology what it was, especially to what extent and in what way the apostle was affected by Hellenistic thought, and over the problem of the agreement or disagreement between Paul and Jesus, in which is involved the determination of some of the most fundamental questions respecting the teaching both of Paul and of Jesus, it is evident that we have still to expect much debate before any general unanimity of opinion shall be reached among scholars.

### **Is the Bible Inerrant?**

The recent volume of Professor Marcus Dods, of Edinburgh, *The Bible: Its Origin and Nature*, consisting of the lectures delivered at Lake Forest University on the Bross Foundation, is in some respects a notable work, and certainly deserving of attention. But it is perhaps even more notable that the volume has excited so little adverse criticism in this country. The book, which is admirably moderate in tone and style, maintains three positions: first, that historical criticism, which "simply collects and applies all the criteria which experience has approved for the determination of the documents, of their character and credibility, and for discriminating between what is to be accepted as historical and what must be regarded as fabricated and embellished," is a method of study which is not only perfectly legitimate in itself, but quite inevitable; second, that historical criticism has declared with "virtually unanimous" assent that literal inerrancy cannot be claimed for the books either of the Old Testament or of the New; third, that Christian faith, inasmuch as it does not rest in the last resort upon an infallible Bible, but upon an infallible Christ, may be to a considerable extent indifferent to the question of the inerrancy of the Bible; for criticism, after it has had its full rights and has worked its will on the New Testament, cannot take Christ from us. Now it is but a few years since the General Assembly of the church in the United States to the Scotch counterpart of which Dr. Dods belongs declared that "our church holds that the inspired word as it came from God is without error." Has the antipathy to such views as these diminished in recent years, or is the personal respect which all American Christians feel for Dr. Dods responsible for this comparative absence of adverse criticism?

**The Holy Spirit in the Bible and in Modern Thought**

There are few subjects upon which there is a more constant demand among ministers and religious teachers for the suggestion of the best literature than the subject of the Holy Spirit. While, on the one side, there are those who hold a clearly defined doctrine of the Spirit, with which they are perfectly satisfied, and to whom the essential mark of a devout man is his emphasis upon the work and personality of the Spirit thus defined, there are, upon the other side, not a few who are sorely perplexed to frame for themselves and for others a conception of the Spirit of God which shall be at the same time biblical, psychologically tenable, and religiously helpful to men of the present day. Readers of the latter class, at any rate, if not of the former, will be interested in the reviews contained in the July number of the *American Journal of Theology* of four recent treatises on the subject of the Holy Spirit. Two of these, the essay by W. R. Schoemaker in Vol. XXII of the *Journal of Biblical Literature*, and the volume of Professor Wood, entitled *The Spirit of God in Biblical Literature*, illustrate the modern method of historical investigation, tracing the development of the conception of the Spirit from its earliest expressions in the Old Testament through to its latest New Testament form. The other two, that of Professor E. H. Johnson, entitled *The Holy Spirit, Then and Now*, and that of Karl Lechler, *Die biblische Lehre vom heiligen Geiste*, while not wholly lacking in historical elements, deal with the matter from the dogmatic and practical rather than from the historical point of view. Certainly, what the church today desires to know is not simply the historical fact that this or that conception of the Spirit was held in ancient times, but what conception can be rationally and helpfully held today. Yet we are persuaded that the point of approach to the latter question must be along the path of the former. In such works as those of Mr. Schoemaker and Mr. Wood there is given to us the foundation at least of a thoroughly historical study of the matter. Who will now go on to complete this work by a study of the conceptions of the Spirit held in different ages of the Christian church, and especially by giving us, in the light of the whole historical investigation, a constructive statement in terms of today's thinking and effective for the promotion of the religious life of the twentieth century?